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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: DAS COULTER'S VISIT TO PERU FOR POL-MIL TALKS

REF: LIMA 0046

Classified By: A/POL David C. Brooks, for Reasons 1.4 (c,d)

Summary:

¶1. (SBU) Peru and the United States held their first-ever bilateral POL-MIL talks on June 26 in Lima. Participants noted the striking overlap between the Peruvians' vision of their own security and that of the United States. The Peruvian team, made up of both Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Defense representatives, stressed that the GOP now defines its defense needs in terms of the country's ability to respond to transnational threats: narcotrafficking, terrorism, piracy, smuggling and trafficking in persons. The Peruvians see cooperation with the U.S. and with other countries as the key to modernizing their armed forces so that they can better confront these new, more diffuse threats. They also laid out an impressive array of agreements and cooperation projects that they have undertaken with their neighbors. The Peruvians continued to maintain their position that Article 98 and SOFA agreement could be best obtained through modifications to the U.S.-Peru Military Cooperation Agreement of 1952 (reftel), but agreed to receive a SOFA team from Washington to explore options. The Peruvians described the talks as a "turning point" in our mil-to-mil relations. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Peru and the United States held their first-ever bilateral POL-MIL talks on June 26 in Lima. DAS Michael Coulter led the U.S. team, which also consisted of WHA State Senior Coordinator Giovanni Snidle and PM/RSAT Jeff Burnett. DOD was represented by OSD-Policy-WHA, Walter Earl, Col. Robert Ballew of OSD-Policy-Forces, Transformation and Resources, and Mark Rondon of OSD Counter-narcotics, Counter-proliferation and Global Threats. SOUTHCOM reps present were J5 Deputy Director for Political-Military Affairs, COL Jose Rivera, Country Director LTC Melba Hernandez and P-3 customs flights expert Kevin Cronin. The Peru team was led by the Peru MFA Director for Defense Issues Minister Augusto Freyre, Deputy Director for Defense Issues Alejandro Ugarte, MFA Director General for South America Jose Salinas, Director of the U.S. Desk Carlos Briceno, Director of the MFA's Counterdrug Office Doris Salazar, and MOD representative Ambassador Jose Bellina. The Peruvian Delegation was also accompanied by a series of military officers who represented all the service branches.

Shared Visions of Security

¶3. (C) The most notable element of the POL-MIL talks was the

striking overlap between the Peruvians' vision of their security and that of the United States. In a number of areas, both sides laid out nearly identical visions of how their governments conceptualize the present security environment in South America, Latin America and the world. For both Peru and the U.S., transnational threats have replaced older models based on state-against-state conflict. In particular, the Peruvians emphasized that the GOP now defines its defense needs in terms of the country's ability to respond to transnational threats: narcotrafficking, terrorism, smuggling and trafficking in persons.

¶4. (SBU) The Peruvians see cooperation with other countries, including the U.S., as the key to modernizing their armed forces so that they can better confront the new spectrum of transnational threats. They enumerated the various events that have contributed to their closer alignment with the U.S., including: MOD Wagner's conversation with SecDef Rumsfeld in Managua in September 2006, SOUTHCOM's Admiral Stavridis' visit to Peru in February and the joint U.S. Peru Air Show that took place that same month, MOD Wagner's meeting with SecDef Gates in March and this month's visit to Peru by SecDef Gates. The Peruvians described the present POL-MIL talks as marking a "turning point" in our mil-to-mil relations.

Priority Areas of Cooperation for the GOP

¶5. (C) The Peruvians described several areas in which they are eager to cooperate with the US and with other countries. These were:

--Combating Narcotrafficking. Minister Salazar emphasized that drug trafficking is a shared problem for Peru and the U.S. She noted that drug addiction in Peru is on the rise and that drug profits from U.S. consumption fund criminal elements in Peru. Salazar characterized U.S. Alternative Development programs as highly successful.

--Global Peacekeeping. Peru's delegation noted that Peru has over 40 observers working in Africa under the aegis of the United Nations and has committed over 200 soldiers to MINUSTAH operations in Haiti. Peru sees peacekeeping as a vital part of the country's security mission and wishes to continue to participate. Ambassador Bellina noted that Peru would be willing to send a Peruvian C-130 to Haiti to help with MINUSTAH's transportation needs. The Peruvians have begun work with Chile on forming a joint peacekeeping unit with that country. (Note: MOD committed to DAS Coulter to sign a 505 Agreement with the U.S. prior to Secretary Gates' upcoming trip, which would enable the U.S. to provide USD 4.4 million as part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative to assist the GOP's refurbishment of an engineering battalion for participation in peacekeeping operations. End Note.)

--Peru seeks to re-establish cooperation with the U.S. in demining operations along the Peru-Ecuador border. The Peruvians gave concrete examples of efforts they have taken to restore their credibility on this issue by engaging in demining operations worthy of international donor attention. The Peruvians presented the outlines of their demining plans, which project that such operations will continue until 2018.

--Regional Integration via the Andean Community (CAN). The Peruvians saw the CAN as a vehicle to promote Latin American integration. While Venezuela has recently left the organization, Chile has taken steps to re-join it and, further, the Peruvians welcomed Colombia's increased presence therein.

--Peru-Brazil Cooperation on the Amazon. Peru is working actively with Brazil and the NGO, Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, to protect the Amazon. In a larger sense, the Peruvians described their relationship with Brazil as a "strategic association." (Note: Both countries are cooperating on the construction of an interoceanic highway that would cross the Andes and pass through impoverished areas of Peru's southern sierra, presumably

stimulating the economy of those marginalized regions. End Note.)

Ongoing Regional Cooperation

¶6. (SBU) Peru's ongoing cooperative efforts with its neighbors constituted a key feature in the activities discussed above. The GOP is supplementing these initiatives with a range of additional outreach activities. The Peruvian team cited a number of examples in which they are trying to engage their immediate and regional neighbors -- even difficult ones -- in joint activities. Minister Freyre mentioned the 2 plus 2 talks that Peru has held with Colombia and will hold next week with Ecuador as well as Peru's technical cooperation with Colombia. Right now, Freyre said, Colombian riverine patrol boats are being repaired at a Peruvian facility in Iquitos.

Peruvian Concerns

¶7. (C) While GOP reps expressed an overall optimistic view of their country's security position, particularly vis-a-vis its neighbors, some of them (like Chile and Ecuador) historic enemies, they also shared with us a variety of concerns:

--Chile's Military Buildup. GOP reps said that Chile's weapons purchases went beyond that country's defense needs and exceeded the combined military purchases of the GOC's neighbors. They are concerned that this arms buildup could create unnecessary regional tensions.

--Bolivarian Instability. The Peruvians said that the GOP had passed through a period of "colder" relations with Venezuela, but that now Peru sought to normalize relations with Caracas. Even so, Ambassador Bellina noted Venezuelan President Chavez is establishing Bolivarian centers in some of the most isolated and marginalized areas of their country with the goal of gaining influence in Peru. He said that the Peruvians are closely watching these activities.

--Concern about Bolivia. Peru seeks closer cooperation with Bolivia. Our interlocutors noted that both countries have a "shared identity" and a long border with one another. Nonetheless, the Peruvian team regarded Bolivia with concern. They noted that the Bolivian military is taking on an ever-greater role in that country's politics.

--FARC and the border with Ecuador. The Peruvians said that the FARC is not present in military form on their side of the border with Ecuador. Should the FARC military elements appear in Peru, they said they would become immediate targets for Peru's military.

Article 98/SOFA

¶8. (C) On both these issues, the Peruvians reiterated their previous position (reftel) that the best vehicle with which to work is the 1952 US-Peru Military Cooperation Agreement. (Comment: It does not appear likely that we will make progress on Article 98 any time soon. Despite ASPA sanctions, the political cost of signing an Article 98 agreement with the U.S. is simply too high for the GOP right now. End Comment) Peruvian reps appeared to take a slightly softer line with the SOFA. Here, again, however, they stressed that the 1952 US-Peru Military Cooperation Agreement provided the appropriate vehicle. The Peruvian delegation noted, without citing specifics that one of the US standard SOFA provisions would require legal and constitutional changes that the present Peruvian Congress would be unlikely to accept. The Peruvians appreciated that the SOFA is a mechanism to enable a more robust and mature mil-mil relationship and agreed to accept a U.S. team in Lima to discuss options and a way ahead.

MOD Wagner Meeting

¶9. (C) Following the conclusion of the formal pol-mil talks, MOD Wagner hosted DAS Coulter, Ambassador Struble, and DCM

for a private meeting. Wagner was accompanied by Vice Foreign Minister Gonzalo Gutierrez. Wagner took the opportunity to stress the strategic importance of the bilats and the momentum behind the U.S.-Peru pol-mil relationship. Wagner laid out his views of security in the hemisphere, highlighting unprecedented coordination with neighbors, concerns with transnational threats and Venezuela, and issues worthy of significant attention like Bolivia. Wagner committed to DAS Coulter to sign the 505 agreement prior to Secretary Gates' upcoming visit, to enable GPOI cooperation.

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Wagner also requested reconsideration of USG support to his demining program, recognizing past failures but highlighting the new commitment of this administration. He agreed that the priority of the U.S.-Peru Pol-Mil agenda for the next year should be to make progress on P-3 flights, a SOFA, and military cooperation.

Comment:

¶10. (SBU) While the meetings did not produce immediate forward movement on key U.S. goals (Article 98, SOFA), they did reveal a strong synchronization between the GOP's vision of transnational threats and that of the U.S. This should not be misinterpreted by readers as an all-fluff, no-substance event. Washington observers were impressed with the depth of the Peruvians preparation, Peru's strong and wide ranging outreach initiatives to its neighbors (including historic enemies Chile and Ecuador), and the Peruvians' frank discussion of the challenges in dealing with Venezuela and Bolivia. In our view, the leadership of the GOP, particularly MOD Wagner, is sincerely interested in stronger cooperation with the United States.

¶11. The cable has been cleared by DAS Michael Coulter.
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